

BRIO Fine Arts Center on the Move

BRIO Fine Arts Center is getting ready to spread its wings well beyond the walls of its Scottsdale Airpark studios. In fact, this Spring, BRIO will not be tied to the location on Raintree at all.

For six and a half years, creative people from all across the Valley have come to BRIO to hone their art techniques, to collaborate with other artists and to become part of BRIO's thriving art community.

"We always welcome and encourage all artists," says BRIO founder Diane Sanborn. "We know that one size doesn't fit all, and we want our students from beginners to professionals to see BRIO as a place to learn and grow at all levels."

Because artists come from across the Metro area to the Airpark, Sanborn now is looking for ways to bring art instruction to BRIO students closer to their homes. "We'll be looking at other locations in Scottsdale as well as a variety of other locations around the valley. – wherever concentrations of our students live," Sanborn says. "We will let them know by email when a new class is available in a particular area that might match their interests."

To many who attend BRIO classes, the experience is much more than an art school. Many friendships have been formed that continue outside of the class in activities beyond original learning relationships. It's not unusual for three or four members of a class to get together later to paint or draw or just have lunch and get to know one another better.

"I feel so lucky to have found BRIO," says student artist Becky Blum. "My weekly acrylic painting class is the time I unwind and get ready to face the week ahead – my stress reducer. I am amazed at the progress I have made, and I look forward to many more good times painting." When Blum is not painting in one of BRIO's open classes, you can find her in her professional role as a Scottsdale realtor.

While basic instruction is always offered, the BRIO staff also sees many of its classes as pushing the conventional creative envelop. "We encourage exploring and discovery," Sanborn says. "That's what BRIO is known for – stretching the imagination. Students bring their talent to the table, and we help them enhance it." BRIO is a place where it's okay to try something new and different, sometimes using non-traditional tools to complete a project. While traditional supplies come from an art supply store, sometimes BRIO students spy the perfect medium on the shelves at Home Depot.

Although artists enjoy creating art in the studio, stepping out to market their art to the public can be a daunting experience. BRIO's art marketing workshops help artists write descriptions of their work and show them how to market to prospective galleries and clients.

Artist Jackie Roliardi describes BRIO as the place where she has been inspired and encouraged to learn and live creatively. She says her BRIO connection "has given me the confidence that I needed to grow as an artist, to show my work and to pursue my artistic dreams."

BRIO Student and McDowell Mountain resident, Josie Bagby, likens her BRIO art experience with a quote from Martha Graham. "There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all of time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and it will be lost. ..At BRIO, Susan Falcon-

Hargraves, Josie's painting instructor, has helped her to "keep the channel" open. "Even when I wanted to take the easier way, she kept me on track."

The BRIO website www.briofinearts.com lists its class schedule and course descriptions, but it offers much to attract visitors to the site. A BRIO artist is profiled on the home page, and artists may join the user-friendly Members Gallery where they can showcase samples of their art for the public to view. A modest fee covers the cost of the gallery, support, hosting and switching out images at any time in the gallery.

BRIO has helped support the art community with exhibits since its beginning, and Sanborn's dedication to promoting fellow artists is reflected in her nomination in 2008 for the Governor's Award for Excellence in Arts Education. Individual as well as group shows are now being considered throughout the Valley at various venues.

Sanborn looks to this new phase of BRIO's development with the excitement and the energy of an entrepreneur wanting to take her business to the next level. She is eager to capitalize on BRIO's reputation for quality art instruction as well as a place for social interaction. "People are always looking for ways to express creativity," she says with a smile. "At BRIO, we want our students to come and learn and meet other like-minded people. That's what makes this special art community grow and thrive."